

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Anne Holmes
Milton Mount Primary School
Gratton Drive
Pound Hill
Crawley
West Sussex
RH10 3AG

Dear Mrs Holmes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Milton Mount Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders, four members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I visited all classrooms, jointly with senior leaders, to observe pupils learning.

Context

Two new deputy headteachers and an early years leader have been appointed since the last inspection. This year, the school appointed two newly qualified teachers who began at the start of this academic year.

Main findings

You have strengthened leadership at Milton Mount well. Senior leaders, appointed since the last inspection, demonstrate the skills and understanding as well as resolute determination to support you effectively. You have also provided additional high-quality training for middle leaders which has increased their ability to support your school improvement drive. Importantly, all leaders work together successfully and are addressing rapidly those areas of weakness identified at the last inspection.

In the 2017 key stage 2 national assessments, pupils did not make strong enough progress in reading and mathematics. In addition, in the 2017 key stage 1 national assessments, pupils' achievement in writing was particularly low. Leaders are rightly maintaining a strong focus on improving pupils' outcomes throughout the school.

You have made useful changes to the school's assessment procedures to ensure that pupils' progress information is increasingly accurate. This strengthens your understanding of pupils' achievement and helps leaders plan more appropriately to improve the quality of teaching and learning. For example, when meeting with teachers, leaders now use progress information more effectively to identify the additional support that some pupils need, to make better progress from their starting points. Senior leaders are able to hold teachers to account more stringently because assessment information is now accurate.

Teachers now pay closer attention to the progress that pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics. They monitor progress carefully and are more effective in providing additional support and challenge for those pupils who need it. Leaders are ensuring that extra provision for both the most able pupils and those who need help to catch up is provided quickly. Additional help for those children who need support in early years is also carefully organised. This ensures that the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development continues to rise.

Governors remain committed to seeing the school improve. However, they are not fully confident in using the school's own assessment and tracking information to draw broad and accurate conclusions about the school's effectiveness. Nor did they evaluate quickly enough the published information for the 2017 key stage 1 and key stage 2 national assessments. Governors' patchy knowledge of pupils' progress, throughout the school, including that of different groups of learners, currently limits their ability to challenge leaders' actions rigorously enough.

You are ensuring that learning is sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Following the last inspection, leaders quickly reviewed how teachers planned learning. Subsequently, you swiftly developed a new approach to ensure that all pupils, regardless of their different starting points, are challenged appropriately in lessons. Leaders are becoming increasingly adept at monitoring teaching and learning to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Similarly, pupils are beginning to demonstrate greater independence in their learning. For instance, they use the

targets teachers set them with increasing confidence, and choose additional activities that stretch and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Teachers' subject knowledge is improving. Leaders have taken the right actions to develop teaching and ensure that it continues to improve over time. A range of well-thought-through strategies, including good professional development, enable teachers to help pupils learn more effectively. Leaders have high expectations of staff, and teachers state that the support they have received has helped them develop their skills well.

In line with the school's new feedback policy, leaders have ensured that the feedback and guidance provided to pupils helps them to improve their work and develop their learning. The policy is being applied more consistently throughout the school. Teachers are beginning to ensure that pupils use the feedback they receive to reflect upon what they have done well, and what they need to do better.

External support

You are wisely drawing support from a wide range of sources, including the local authority. However, you have also gone beyond the boundaries of West Sussex to develop effective partnerships with good and outstanding schools from further afield. You are keen to ensure that staff learn from these successful schools to improve the standards at Milton Mount.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dom Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector